



One Hundred Songs of Kabir

Poems of Guru Kabir Selected
by Rabindranath Tagore

I. 13. mo ko kahân dhûnro
bande

O servant, where dost thou
seek Me?

Lo! I am beside thee.

I am neither in temple nor in
mosque: I am neither in
Kaaba nor

in Kailash:

Neither am I in rites and
ceremonies, nor in Yoga and

renunciation.

If thou art a true seeker, thou
shalt at once see Me: thou
shalt

meet Me in a moment of time.

Kabîr says, "O Sadhu! God is
the breath of all breath."

II

I. 16. Santan jât na pûcho
nirguniyân

It is needless to ask of a saint
the caste to which he belongs;

For the priest, the warrior. the
tradesman, and all the

thirty-six castes, alike are
seeking for God.

It is but folly to ask what the
caste of a saint may be;

The barber has sought God,
the washerwoman, and the
carpenter--

Even Raidas was a seeker
after God.

The Rishi Swapacha was a

tanner by caste.

Hindus and Moslems alike
have achieved that End,
where remains no
mark of distinction.

III

I. 57. sâdho bhâî, jîval hî karo
âs'â

O friend! hope for Him whilst
you live, know whilst you live,
understand whilst you live: for
in life deliverance abides.

If your bonds be not broken
whilst living, what hope of
deliverance in death?

It is but an empty dream, that
the soul shall have union with
Him

because it has passed from
the body:

If He is found now, He is
found then,

If not, we do but go to dwell
in the City of Death.

If you have union now, you
shall have it hereafter.

Bathe in the truth, know the
true Guru, have faith in the
true

Name!

Kabîr says: "It is the Spirit of
the quest which helps; I am
the

slave of this Spirit of the
quest."

IV

I. 58. bâgo nâ jâ re nâ jâ

Do not go to the garden of
flowers!

O Friend! go not there;

In your body is the garden of
flowers.

Take your seat on the
thousand petals of the lotus,
and there

gaze on the Infinite Beauty.

I. 63. avadhû, mâyâ tajî na jây

Tell me, Brother, how can I
renounce Maya?

When I gave up the tying of
ribbons, still I tied my
garment

about me:

When I gave up tying my
garment, still I covered my
body in its

folds.

So, when I give up passion, I
see that anger remains;

And when I renounce anger,
greed is with me still;

And when greed is
vanquished, pride and
vainglory remain;

When the mind is detached
and casts Maya away, still it
clings to

the letter.

Kabîr says, "Listen to me,
dear Sadhu! the true path is

rarely

found."

VI

I. 83. candâ jhalkai yahi ghat
mâhîn

The moon shines in my body,
but my blind eyes cannot see
it:

The moon is within me, and so
is the sun.

The unstruck drum of Eternity
is sounded within me; but my

deaf

ears cannot hear it.

So long as man clamours for
the I and the Mine,

his works are as naught:

When all love of the I and the
Mine is dead, then

the work of the Lord is done.

For work has no other aim
than the getting of
knowledge:

When that comes, then work
is put away.

The flower blooms for the
fruit: when the fruit comes,
the flower

withers.

The musk is in the deer, but it
seeks it not within itself: it
wanders in quest of grass.

VII

I. 85. Sâdho, Brahm alakh
lakhâyâ

When He Himself reveals
Himself, Brahma brings into
manifestation

That which can never be seen.

As the seed is in the plant, as
the shade is in the tree, as the

void is in the sky, as infinite
forms are in the void--

So from beyond the Infinite,
the Infinite comes; and from
the

Infinite the finite extends.

The creature is in Brahma,
and Brahma is in the creature:
they

are ever distinct, yet ever
united.

He Himself is the tree, the
seed, and the germ.

He Himself is the flower, the
fruit, and the shade.

He Himself is the sun, the
light, and the lighted.

He Himself is Brahma,

creature, and Maya.

He Himself is the manifold
form, the infinite space;

He is the breath, the word,
and the meaning.

He Himself is the limit and
the limitless: and beyond both
the

limited and the limitless is He,
the Pure Being.

He is the Immanent Mind in
Brahma and in the creature.

The Supreme Soul is seen
within the soul,

The Point is seen within the
Supreme Soul,

And within the Point, the
reflection is seen again.

Kabîr is blest because he has
this supreme vision!

VIII

I. 101. is ghat antar bâg
bagîce

Within this earthen vessel are

bowers and groves, and
within it

is the Creator:

Within this vessel are the
seven oceans and the
unnumbered stars.

The touchstone and the jewel-
appraiser are within;

And within this vessel the
Eternal soundeth, and the
spring wells

up.

Kabîr says: "Listen to me, my
Friend! My beloved Lord is
within."

IX

I. 104. aisâ lo nahîn taisâ lo

O How may I ever express
that secret word?

O how can I say He is not like
this, and He is like that?

If I say that He is within me,
the universe is ashamed:

If I say that He is without me,

it is falsehood.

He makes the inner and the
outer worlds to be indivisibly
one;

The conscious and the
unconscious, both are His
footstools.

He is neither manifest nor
hidden, He is neither revealed
nor

unrevealed:

There are no words to tell that
which He is.

X

I. 121. tohi mori lagan lagâye
re phakîr wâ

To Thee Thou hast drawn my
love, O Fakir!

I was sleeping in my own
chamber, and Thou didst
awaken me;

striking me with Thy voice, O
Fakir!

I was drowning in the deeps
of the ocean of this world, and

Thou didst save me: upholding
me with Thine arm, O Fakir!

Only one word and no
second--and Thou hast made
me tear off all

my bonds, O Fakir!

Kabîr says, "Thou hast united
Thy heart to my heart, O
Fakir!"

XI-XX

XI

I. 131. nis' din khelat rahî
sakhiyân sang

I played day and night with
my comrades, and now I am
greatly

afraid.

So high is my Lord's palace,
my heart trembles to mount
its

stairs: yet I must not be shy, if
I would enjoy His love.

My heart must cleave to my
Lover; I must withdraw my

veil, and

meet Him with all my body:

Mine eyes must perform the
ceremony of the lamps of love.

Kabîr says: "Listen to me,
friend: he understands who
loves. If

you feel not love's longing for
your Beloved One, it is vain

to adorn your body, vain to
put unguent on your eyelids."

II. 24. hamsâ, kaho purâtan
vât

Tell me, O Swan, your ancient
tale.

From what land do you come,
O Swan? to what shore will
you fly?

Where would you take your
rest, O Swan, and what do you
seek?

Even this morning, O Swan,
awake, arise, follow me!

There is a land where no
doubt nor sorrow have rule:
where the

terror of Death is no more.

There the woods of spring are
a-bloom, and the fragrant
scent "He

is I" is borne on the wind:

There the bee of the heart is
deeply immersed, and desires
no

other joy.

XIII

II. 37. angadhiyâ devâ

O Lord Increate, who will
serve Thee?

Every votary offers his
worship to the God of his own
creation:

each day he receives service--

None seek Him, the Perfect:
Brahma, the Indivisible Lord.

They believe in ten Avatars;
but no Avatar can be the

Infinite

Spirit, for he suffers the
results of his deeds:

The Supreme One must be
other than this.

The Yogi, the Sanyasi, the
Ascetics, are disputing one
with

another:

Kabîr says, "O brother! he
who has seen that radiance of
love,

he is saved."

XIV

II. 56. dariyâ kî lahar dariyâo
hai jî

The river and its waves are
one

surf: where is the difference
between the river and its
waves?

When the wave rises, it is the
water; and when it falls, it is
the same water again. Tell

me, Sir, where is the
distinction?

Because it has been named as
wave, shall it no longer be
considered as water?

Within the Supreme Brahma,
the worlds are being told like
beads:

Look upon that rosary with
the eyes of wisdom.

XV

II. 57. jânkhelâ vasant

riturâj

Where Spring, the lord of the
seasons, reigneth, there the

Unstruck Music sounds of
itself,

There the streams of light
flow in all directions;

Few are the men who can
cross to that shore!

There, where millions of
Krishnas stand with hands
folded,

Where millions of Vishnus
bow their heads,

Where millions of Brahmâs
are reading the Vedas,

Where millions of Shivas are
lost in contemplation,

Where millions of Indras dwell
in the sky,

Where the demi-gods and the
munis are unnumbered,

Where millions of Saraswatis,
Goddess of Music, play on the
vina--

There is my Lord self-
revealed: and the scent of
sandal and

flowers dwells in those deeps.

XVI

II. 59. jânh, cet acet khambh
dôû

Between the poles of the
conscious and the
unconscious, there has
the mind made a swing:

Thereon hang all beings and
all worlds, and that swing
never

ceases its sway.

Millions of beings are there:
the sun and the moon in their

courses are there:

Millions of ages pass, and the
swing goes on.

All swing! the sky and the
earth and the air and the
water; and

the Lord Himself taking form:
And the sight of this has made
Kabîr a servant.

XVII

II. 61. grah candra tapan jot
varat hai

The light of the sun, the
moon, and the stars shines
bright:

The melody of love swells
forth, and the rhythm of love's
detachment beats the time.

Day and night, the chorus of
music fills the heavens; and
Kabîr

says

"My Beloved One gleams like
the lightning flash in the sky."

Do you know how the
moments perform their
adoration?

Waving its row of lamps, the
universe sings in worship day
and

night,

There are the hidden banner
and the secret canopy:

There the sound of the unseen
bells is heard.

Kabîr says: "There adoration
never ceases; there the Lord
of the

Universe sitteth on His
throne."

The whole world does its
works and commits its errors:
but few

are the lovers who know the
Beloved.

The devout seeker is he who
mingles in his heart the
double

currents of love and
detachment, like the mingling
of the

streams of Ganges and Jumna;

In his heart the sacred water
flows day and night; and thus
the

round of births and deaths is
brought to an end.

Behold what wonderful rest is
in the Supreme Spirit! and he

enjoys it, who makes himself
meet for it.

Held by the cords of love, the
swing of the Ocean of Joy
sways to

and fro; and a mighty sound
breaks forth in song.

See what a lotus blooms there
without water! and Kabîr says

"My heart's bee drinks its
nectar."

What a wonderful lotus it is,
that blooms at the heart of the
spinning wheel of the
universe! Only a few pure
souls know of
its true delight.

Music is all around it, and
there the heart partakes of
the joy
of the Infinite Sea.

Kabîr says: "Dive thou into
that Ocean of sweetness: thus
let all

errors of life and of death flee
away."

Behold how the thirst of the
five senses is quenched there!
and

the three forms of misery are
no more!

Kabîr says: "It is the sport of
the Unattainable One: look

within, and behold how the
moon-beams of that Hidden
One shine

in you."

There falls the rhythmic beat
of life and death:

Rapture wells forth, and all
space is radiant with light.

There the Unstruck Music is
sounded; it is the music of the
love

of the three worlds.

There millions of lamps of sun
and of moon are burning;

There the drum beats, and the
lover swings in play.

There love-songs resound, and
light rains in showers; and the

worshipper is entranced in
the taste of the heavenly
nectar.

Look upon life and death;
there is no separation
between them,

The right hand and the left

hand are one and the same.

Kabîr says: "There the wise
man is speechless; for this
truth may

never be found in Vadas or in
books."

I have had my Seat on the
Self-poised One,

I have drunk of the Cup of the
Ineffable,

I have found the Key of the
Mystery,

I have reached the Root of
Union.

Travelling by no track, I have
come to the Sorrowless Land:
very

easily has the mercy of the
great Lord come upon me.

They have sung of Him as
infinite and unattainable: but I
in my

meditations have seen Him
without sight.

That is indeed the sorrowless

land, and none know the path
that

leads there:

Only he who is on that path
has surely transcended all
sorrow.

Wonderful is that land of rest,
to which no merit can win;

It is the wise who has seen it,
it is the wise who has sung of
it.

This is the Ultimate Word: but

can any express its
marvellous

savour?

He who has savoured it once,
he knows what joy it can give.

Kabîr says: "Knowing it, the
ignorant man becomes wise,
and the

wise man becomes speechless
and silent,

The worshipper is utterly
inebriated,

His wisdom and his
detachment are made perfect;

He drinks from the cup of the
inbreathings and the
outbreathings

of love."

There the whole sky is filled
with sound, and there that
music is

made without fingers and
without strings;

There the game of pleasure
and pain does not cease.

Kabîr says: "If you merge your
life in the Ocean of Life, you

will find your life in the
Supreme Land of Bliss."

What a frenzy of ecstasy there
is in every hour! and the

worshipper is pressing out
and drinking the essence of
the

hours: he lives in the life of
Brahma.

I speak truth, for I have

accepted truth in life; I am
now

attached to truth, I have
swept all tinsel away.

Kabîr says: "Thus is the
worshipper set free from fear;
thus have

all errors of life and of death
left him."

There the sky is filled with
music:

There it rains nectar:

There the harp-strings jingle,
and there the drums beat.

What a secret splendour is
there, in the mansion of the
sky!

There no mention is made of
the rising and the setting of
the

sun;

In the ocean of manifestation,
which is the light of love, day
and night are felt to be one.

Joy for ever, no sorrow,--no
struggle!

There have I seen joy filled to
the brim, perfection of joy;

No place for error is there.

Kabîr says: "There have I
witnessed the sport of One
Bliss!"

I have known in my body the
sport of the universe: I have
escaped

from the error of this world..

The inward and the outward
are become as one sky, the
Infinite

and the finite are united: I am
drunken with the sight of this

All!

This Light of Thine fulfils the
universe: the lamp of love that

burns on the salver of
knowledge.

Kabîr says: "There error
cannot enter, and the conflict
of life

and death is felt no more."

XVIII

II. 77. maddh âkas' âp jahân
baithe

The middle region of the sky,
wherein the spirit dwelleth, is

radiant with the music of
light;

There, where the pure and
white music blossoms, my
Lord takes His

delight.

In the wondrous effulgence of
each hair of His body, the

brightness of millions of suns
and of moons is lost.

On that shore there is a city,
where the rain of nectar pours
and

pours, and never ceases.

Kabîr says: "Come, O
Dharmadas! and see my great
Lord's Durbar."

XIX

II. 20. paramâtam guru nikat
virâjatn

O my heart! the Supreme
Spirit, the great Master, is
near you:

wake, oh wake!

Run to the feet of your
Beloved: for your Lord stands
near to your

head.

You have slept for

unnumbered ages; this
morning will you not

wake?

XX

II. 22. man tu pâr utar kân
jaiho

To what shore would you
cross, O my heart? there is no
traveller

before you, there is no road:

Where is the movement,
where is the rest, on that

shore?

There is no water; no boat, no
boatman, is there;

There is not so much as a
rope to tow the boat, nor a
man to draw

it.

No earth, no sky, no time, no
thing, is there: no shore, no
ford!

There, there is neither body
nor mind: and where is the
place

that shall still the thirst of the
soul? You shall find naught
in that emptiness.

Be strong, and enter into your
own body: for there your
foothold

is firm. Consider it well, O my
heart! go not elsewhere,

Kabîr says: "Put all
imaginations away, and stand
fast in that

which you are."

XXI-XXX

XXI

II. 33. ghar ghar dîpak barai

Lamps burn in every house, O
blind one! and you cannot see
them.

One day your eyes shall
suddenly be opened, and you
shall see:

and the fetters of death will
fall from you.

There is nothing to say or to
hear, there is nothing to do: it
is

he who is living, yet dead,
who shall never die again.

Because he lives in solitude,
therefore the Yogi says that
his

home is far away.

Your Lord is near: yet you are
climbing the palm-tree to seek
Him.

The Brâhman priest goes from
house to house and initiates
people

into faith:

Alas! the true fountain of life
is beside you., and you have
set

up a stone to worship.

Kabîr says: "I may never
express how sweet my Lord
is. Yoga and

the telling of beads, virtue
and vice--these are naught to

Him."

XXII

II. 38. Sâdho, so satgur mohi
bhâwai

O brother, my heart yearns for
that true Guru, who fills the
cup

of true love, and drinks of it
himself, and offers it then to

me.

He removes the veil from the
eyes, and gives the true Vision

of

Brahma:

He reveals the worlds in Him,
and makes me to hear the
Unstruck

Music:

He shows joy and sorrow to
be one:

He fills all utterance with
love.

Kabîr says: "Verily he has no
fear, who has such a Guru to

lead

him to the shelter of safety!"

XXIII

II. 40. tinwir sâñjh kê gahirâ
âwai

The shadows of evening fall
thick and deep, and the
darkness of

love envelops the body and
the mind.

Open the window to the west,
and be lost in the sky of love;

Drink the sweet honey that
steeps the petals of the lotus
of the

heart.

Receive the waves in your
body: what splendour is in the
region

of the sea!

Hark! the sounds of conches
and bells are rising.

Kabîr says: "O brother,
behold! the Lord is in this

vessel of my

body."

XXIV

II. 48. jis se rahani apâr jagat
men

More than all else do I cherish
at heart that love which
makes me

to live a limitless life in this
world.

It is like the lotus, which lives
in the water and blooms in the

water: yet the water cannot
touch its petals, they open
beyond

its reach.

It is like a wife, who enters
the fire at the bidding of love.

She burns and lets others
grieve, yet never dishonours
love.

This ocean of the world is
hard to cross: its waters are
very

deep. Kabîr says: "Listen to
me, O Sadhu! few there are
who

have reached its end."

XXV

II. 45. Hari ne apnâ âp
chipâyâ

My Lord hides Himself, and
my Lord wonderfully reveals
Himself:

My Lord has encompassed me
with hardness, and my Lord
has cast

down my limitations.

My Lord brings to me words
of sorrow and words of joy,
and He

Himself heals their strife.

I will offer my body and mind
to my Lord: I will give up my
life,

but never can I forget my
Lord!

XXVI

II. 75. ônkâr siwae kôî sirjai

All things are created by the
Om;

The love-form is His body.

He is without form, without
quality, without decay:

Seek thou union with Him!

But that formless God takes a
thousand forms in the eyes of
His

creatures:

He is pure and indestructible,

His form is infinite and
fathomless,

He dances in rapture, and
waves of form arise from His
dance.

The body and the mind cannot
contain themselves, when
they are

touched by His great joy.

He is immersed in all
consciousness, all joys, and all
sorrows;

He has no beginning and no
end;

He holds all within His bliss.

XXVII

II. 81. satgur sôî dayâ kar
dînhâ

It is the mercy of my true
Guru that has made me to
know the

unknown;

I have learned from Him how

to walk without feet, to see
without

eyes, to hear without ears, to
drink without mouth, to fly

without wings;

I have brought my love and
my meditation into the land
where

there is no sun and moon, nor
day and night.

Without eating, I have tasted
of the sweetness of nectar;
and

without water, I have
quenched my thirst.

Where there is the response
of delight, there is the fullness
of

joy. Before whom can that joy
be uttered?

Kabîr says: "The Guru is great
beyond words, and great is
the

good fortune of the disciple."

II. 85. nirgun âge sargun
nâcai

Before the Unconditioned, the
Conditioned dances: "Thou
and I are

one!" this trumpet proclaims.

The Guru comes, and bows
down before the disciple:

This is the greatest of
wonders.

XXIX

II. 87. Kabîr kab se bhaye vairâgî

Gorakhnath asks Kabîr:

"Tell me, O Kabîr, when did
your vocation begin? Where
did your

love have its rise?"

Kabîr answers:

"When He whose forms are
manifold had not begun His
play: when

there was no Guru, and no

disciple: when the world was
not

spread out: when the
Supreme One was alone--

Then I became an ascetic;
then, O Gorakh, my love was
drawn to

Brahma.

Brahma did not hold the
crown on his head; the god
Vishnu was not

anointed as king; the power of
Shiva was still unborn; when I

was instructed in Yoga.

I became suddenly revealed in
Benares, and Râmânanda
illuminated

me;

I brought with me the thirst
for the Infinite, and I have
come

for the meeting with Him.

In simplicity will I unite with
the Simple One; my love will

surge up.

O Gorakh, march thou with
His music!"

XXX

II. 95. yâ tarvar men ek
pakherû

On this tree is a bird: it
dances in the joy of life.

None knows where it is: and
who knows what the burden
of its

music may be?

Where the branches throw a
deep shade, there does it have
its

nest: and it comes in the
evening and flies away in the
morning,

and says not a word of that
which it means.

None tell me of this bird that
sings within me.

It is neither coloured nor
colourless: it has neither form
nor

outline:

It sits in the shadow of love.

It dwells within the
Unattainable, the Infinite, and
the Eternal;

and no one marks when it
comes and goes.

Kabîr says: "O brother Sadhu!
deep is the mystery. Let wise
men

seek to know where rests that
bird."

XXXI-XL

XXXI

II. 100. nis` din sâlai ghâw

A sore pain troubles me day
and night, and I cannot sleep;

I long for the meeting with my
Beloved, and my father's
house

gives me pleasure no more.

The gates of the sky are
opened, the temple is

revealed:

I meet my husband, and leave
at His feet the offering of my
body

and my mind.

XXXII

II. 103. nâco re mero man,
matta hoy

Dance, my heart! dance to-
day with joy.

The strains of love fill the
days and the nights with

music, and
the world is listening to its
melodies:

Mad with joy, life and death
dance to the rhythm of this
music.

The hills and the sea and the
earth dance. The world of
man

dances in laughter and tears.

Why put on the robe of the
monk, and live aloof from the
world in

lonely pride?

Behold! my heart dances in
the delight of a hundred arts;
and

the Creator is well pleased.

XXXIII

II. 105. man mast huâ tab
kyon bole

Where is the need of words,
when love has made drunken
the heart?

I have wrapped the diamond
in my cloak; why open it again
and

again?

When its load was light, the
pan of the balance went up:
now it

is full, where is the need for
weighing?

The swan has taken its flight
to the lake beyond the
mountains;

why should it search for the

pools and ditches any more?

Your Lord dwells within you:
why need your outward eyes
be

opened?

Kabîr says: "Listen, my
brother! my Lord, who
ravishes my eyes,

has united Himself with me."

XXXIV

II. 110. mohi tohi lâgî kaise
chute

How could the love between
Thee and me sever?

As the leaf of the lotus abides
on the water: so thou art my

Lord, and I am Thy servant.

As the night-bird Chakor
gazes all night at the moon: so
Thou art

my Lord and I am Thy
servant.

From the beginning until the
ending of time, there is love

between Thee and me; and
how shall such love be
extinguished?

Kabîr says: "As the river
enters into the ocean, so my
heart

touches Thee."

XXXV

II. 113. vâlam, âwo hamâre
geh re

My body and my mind are
grieved for the want of Thee;

O my Beloved! come to my
house.

When people say I am Thy
bride, I am ashamed; for I
have not

touched Thy heart with my
heart.

Then what is this love of
mine? I have no taste for food,
I have

no sleep; my heart is ever
restless within doors and
without.

As water is to the thirsty, so is
the lover to the bride. Who is
there that will carry my news
to my Beloved?

Kabîr is restless: he is dying
for sight of Him.

XXXVI

II. 126. jâg piyârî, ab kân
sowai

O friend, awake, and sleep no
more!

The night is over and gone,
would you lose your day also?

Others, who have wakened,
have received jewels;

O foolish woman! you have
lost all whilst you slept.

Your lover is wise, and you are
foolish, O woman!

You never prepared the bed of
your husband:

O mad one! you passed your
time in silly play.

Your youth was passed in
vain, for you did not know
your Lord;

Wake, wake! See! your bed is
empty: He left you in the
night.

Kabîr says: "Only she wakes,
whose heart is pierced with
the

arrow of His music."

XXXVII

I. 36. sîr parkâs', tanh rain
kahân pâiye

Where is the night, when the
sun is shining? If it is night,

then the sun withdraws its
light. Where knowledge is,
can

ignorance endure?

If there be ignorance, then
knowledge must die.

If there be lust, how can love
be there? Where there is love,
there is no lust.

Lay hold on your sword, and
join in the fight. Fight, O my
brother, as long as life lasts.

Strike off your enemy's head,
and there make an end of him
quickly: then come, and bow
your head at your King's
Durbar.

He who is brave, never
forsakes the battle: he who
flies from it

is no true fighter.

In the field of this body a
great war goes forward,
against

passion, anger, pride, and
greed:

It is in the kingdom of truth,
contentment and purity, that
this

battle is raging; and the
sword that rings forth most
loudly is

the sword of His Name.

Kabîr says: "When a brave

knight takes the field, a host
of

cowards is put to flight.

It is a hard fight and a weary
one, this fight of the

truth-seeker: for the vow of
the truth-seeker is more hard
than

that of the warrior, or of the
widowed wife who would
follow her

husband.

For the warrior fights for a
few hours, and the widow's
struggle

with death is soon ended:

But the truth-seeker's battle
goes on day and night, as long
as

life lasts it never ceases."

XXXVIII

I. 50. bhram kâ tâlâ lagâ
mahal re

The lock of error shuts the

gate, open it with the key of
love:

Thus, by opening the door,
thou shalt wake the Beloved.

Kabîr says: "O brother! do not
pass by such good fortune as
this."

XXXIX

I. 59. sâdho, yah tan thâth
tanvure ka

O friend! this body is His lyre;
He tightens its strings, and

draws from it the melody of
Brahma.

If the strings snap and the
keys slacken, then to dust
must this

instrument of dust return:

Kabîr says: "None but Brahma
can evoke its melodies."

XL

I. 65. avadhû bhûle ko ghar
lâwe

He is dear to me indeed who
can call back the wanderer to
his

home. In the home is the true
union, in the home is
enjoyment

of life: why should I forsake
my home and wander in the
forest?

If Brahma helps me to realize
truth, verily I will find both
bondage and deliverance in
home.

He is dear to me indeed who
has power to dive deep into
Brahma;

whose mind loses itself with
ease in His contemplation.

He is dear to me who knows
Brahma, and can dwell on His
supreme

truth in meditation; and who
can play the melody of the

Infinite by uniting love and
renunciation in life.

Kabîr says: "The home is the

abiding place; in the home is

reality; the home helps to
attain Him Who is real. So
stay

where you are, and all things
shall come to you in time."

XLI-L

XLI

I. 76. santo, sahaj samâdh
bhalî

O sadhu! the simple union is
the best. Since the day when I

met

with my Lord, there has been
no end to the sport of our
love.

I shut not my eyes, I close not
my ears, I do not mortify my

body;

I see with eyes open and
smile, and behold His beauty
everywhere:

I utter His Name, and
whatever I see, it reminds me
of Him;

whatever I do., it becomes His
worship.

The rising and the setting are
one to me; all contradictions
are

solved.

Wherever I go, I move round
Him,

All I achieve is His service:

When I lie down, I lie
prostrate at His feet.

He is the only adorable one to
me: I have none other.

My tongue has left off impure
words, it sings His glory day
and

night:

Whether I rise or sit down, I
can never forget Him; for the
rhythm of His music beats in
my ears.

Kabîr says: "My heart is
frenzied, and I disclose in my
soul what

is hidden. I am immersed in
that one great bliss which
transcends all pleasure and
pain."

XLII

I. 79. tîrath men to sab pâñî
hai

There is nothing but water at
the holy bathing places; and I
know

that they are useless, for I
have bathed in them.

The images are all lifeless,
they cannot speak; I know, for
I

have cried aloud to them.

The Purana and the Koran are
mere words; lifting up the
curtain,

I have seen.

Kabîr gives utterance to the
words of experience; and he
knows

very well that all other things

are untrue.

XLIII

I. 82. pâñi vic mîn piyâsî

I laugh when I hear that the
fish in the water is thirsty:

You do not see that the Real is
in your home, and you wander
from

forest to forest listlessly!

Here is the truth! Go where
you will, to Benares or to
Mathura;

if you do not find your soul,
the world is unreal to you.

XLIV

I. 93. gagan math gaib nisân
gade

The Hidden Banner is planted
in the temple of the sky; there
the

blue canopy decked with the
moon and set with bright
jewels is

spread.

There the light of the sun and
the moon is shining: still your
mind to silence before that
splendour.

Kabîr says: "He who has
drunk of this nectar, wanders
like one
who is mad."

XLV

I. 97. sâdho, ko hai kânh se
âyo

Who are you, and whence do
you come?

Where dwells that Supreme
Spirit, and how does He have
His sport

with all created things?

The fire is in the wood; but
who awakens it suddenly?
Then it

turns to ashes, and where
goes the force of the fire?

The true guru teaches that He
has neither limit nor

infinitude.

Kabîr says: "Brahma suits His
language to the
understanding of

His hearer."

XLVI

I. 98. sâdho, sahajai kâyâ
s'odho

O sadhu! purify your body in
the simple way.

As the seed is within the
banyan tree, and within the

seed are

the flowers, the fruits, and the
shade:

So the germ is within the
body, and within that germ is
the body

again.

The fire, the air, the water, the
earth, and the aether; you

cannot have these outside of
Him.

O, Kazi, O Pundit, consider it

well: what is there that is not
in
the soul?

The water-filled pitcher is
placed upon water, it has
water

within and without.

It should not be given a name,
lest it call forth the error of
dualism.

Kabîr says: "Listen to the
Word, the Truth, which is your

essence. He speaks the Word
to Himself; and He Himself is
the

Creator."

XLVII

I. 102. tarvar ek mûl vin thâdâ

There is a strange tree, which
stands without roots and
bears

fruits without blossoming;

It has no branches and no

leaves, it is lotus all over.

Two birds sing there; one is
the Guru, and the other the

disciple:

The disciple chooses the
manifold fruits of life and
tastes them,

and the Guru beholds him in
joy.

What Kabîr says is hard to
understand: "The bird is
beyond

seeking, yet it is most clearly
visible. The Formless is in

the midst of all forms. I sing
the glory of forms."

XLVIII

I. 107. calat mansâ acal kînhî

I have stilled my restless
mind, and my heart is radiant:
for in

Thatness I have seen beyond
That-ness. In company I have
seen

the Comrade Himself.

Living in bondage, I have set
myself free: I have broken
away

from the clutch of all
narrowness.

Kabîr says: "I have attained
the unattainable, and my
heart is

coloured with the colour of
love."

XLIX

I. 105. jo dîsai, so to hai nâhîn

That which you see is not: and
for that which is, you have no
words.

Unless you see, you believe
not: what is told you you
cannot

accept.

He who is discerning knows
by the word; and the ignorant
stands

gaping.

Some contemplate the
Formless, and others meditate
on form: but

the wise man knows that
Brahma is beyond both.

That beauty of His is not seen
of the eye: that metre of His is
not heard of the ear.

Kabîr says: "He who has found
both love and renunciation
never

descends to death."

L

I. 126. muralî bajat akhand
sadâye

The flute of the Infinite is
played without ceasing, and
its

sound is love:

When love renounces all
limits, it reaches truth.

How widely the fragrance
spreads! It has no end,
nothing stands

in its way.

The form of this melody is
bright like a million suns:

incomparably sounds the vina,
the vina of the notes of truth.

LI-LX

LI

I. 129. sakhiyo, ham hûn bhâi
vâlamâs'î

Dear friend, I am eager to
meet my Beloved! My youth

has

flowered, and the pain of
separation from Him troubles
my

breast.

I am wandering yet in the
alleys of knowledge without
purpose,

but I have received His news
in these alleys of knowledge.

I have a letter from my
Beloved: in this letter is an
unutterable

message, and now my fear of
death is done away.

Kabîr says: "O my loving
friend! I have got for my gift
the

Deathless One."

LII

I. 130. sâin vin dard kareje
hoy

When I am parted from my
Beloved, my heart is full of
misery: I

have no comfort in the day, I
have no sleep in the night. To

whom shall I tell my sorrow?

The night is dark; the hours
slip by. Because my Lord is
absent,

I start up and tremble with
fear.

Kabîr says: "Listen, my friend!
there is no other satisfaction,

save in the encounter with the
Beloved."

LIII

I. 122. kaum muralî s'abd s'un
ânand bhayo

What is that flute whose
music thrills me with joy?

The flame burns without a
lamp;

The lotus blossoms without a
root;

Flowers bloom in clusters;

The moon-bird is devoted to

the moon;

With all its heart the rain-bird
longs for the shower of rain;

But upon whose love does the
Lover concentrate His entire
life?

LIV

I. 112. s'untâ nahî dhun kî
khabar

Have you not heard the tune
which the Unstruck Music is
playing?

In the midst of the chamber
the harp of joy is gently and
sweetly played; and where is
the need of going without to
hear

it?

If you have not drunk of the
nectar of that One Love, what
boots

it though you should purge
yourself of all stains?

The Kazi is searching the
words of the Koran, and

instructing

others: but if his heart be not
steeped in that love, what
does

it avail, though he be a
teacher of men?

The Yogi dyes his garments
with red: but if he knows
naught of

that colour of love, what does
it avail though his garments
be

tinted?

Kabîr says: "Whether I be in
the temple or the balcony, in
the

camp or in the flower garden,
I tell you truly that every

moment my Lord is taking His
delight in me."

LV

I. 73. bhakti kê mârag jhînâ re

Subtle is the path of love!

Therein there is no asking and

no not-asking,

There one loses one's self at
His feet,

There one is immersed in the
joy of the seeking: plunged in
the

depths of love as the fish in the
water.

The lover is never slow in
offering his head for his
Lord's

service.

Kabîr declares the secret of
this love.

LVI

I. 68. bhâi kôî satguru sant
kahâwaî

He is the real Sadhu, who can
reveal the form of the
Formless to

the vision of these eyes:

Who teaches the simple way
of attaining Him, that is other
than

rites or ceremonies:

Who does not make you close
the doors, and hold the
breath, and

renounce the world:

Who makes you perceive the
Supreme Spirit wherever the
mind

attaches itself:

Who teaches you to be still in
the midst of all your activities.

Ever immersed in bliss,

having no fear in his mind, he
keeps the

spirit of union in the midst of
all enjoyments.

The infinite dwelling of the
Infinite Being is everywhere:
in

earth, water, sky, and air:

Firm as the thunderbolt, the
seat of the seeker is
established

above the void.

He who is within is without: I
see Him and none else.

LVII

I. 66. sâdho, s'abd sâdhnâ
kîjai

Receive that Word from which
the Universe springeth!

That word is the Guru; I have
heard it, and become the
disciple.

How many are there who
know the meaning of that
word?

O Sadhu! practise that Word!

The Vedas and the Puranas
proclaim it,

The world is established in it,

The Rishis and devotees speak
of it:

But none knows the mystery
of the Word.

The householder leaves his
house when he hears it,

The ascetic comes back to

love when he hears it,
The Six Philosophies expound
it,

The Spirit of Renunciation
points to that Word,

From that Word the world-
form has sprung,

That Word reveals all.

Kabîr says: "But who knows
whence the Word cometh?

LVIII

I. 63. pîle pyâlâ, ho matwâlâ

Empty the Cup! O be
drunken!

Drink the divine nectar of His
Name!

Kabîr says: "Listen to me,
dear Sadhu!

From the sole of the foot to
the crown of the head this
mind is

filled with poison."

LIX

I. 52. khasm na cînhai bâwari

O man, if thou dost not know
thine own Lord, whereof art
thou so

proud?

Put thy cleverness away: mere
words shall never unite thee
to

Him.

Do not deceive thyself with
the witness of the Scriptures:

Love is something other than
this, and he who has sought it
truly

has found it.

LX

I. 56. sukh sindh kî sair kê

The savour of wandering in
the ocean of deathless life has
rid me

of all my asking:

As the tree is in the seed, so
all diseases are in this asking.

LXI-LXX

LXI

I. 48. sukh sâgar men âike

When at last you are come to
the ocean of happiness, do not
go

back thirsty.

Wake, foolish man! for Death
stalks you. Here is pure water

before you; drink it at every
breath.

Do not follow the mirage on
foot, but thirst for the nectar;

Dhruva, Prahlad, and
Shukadeva have drunk of it,
and also Raidas

has tasted it:

The saints are drunk with
love, their thirst is for love.

Kabîr says: "Listen to me,
brother! The nest of fear is
broken.

Not for a moment have you

come face to face with the
world:

You are weaving your
bondage of falsehood, your
words are full of

deception:

With the load of desires which
you hold on your head, how
can

you be light?"

Kabîr says: "Keep within you
truth, detachment, and love."

LXII

I. 35. satî ko kaun s'ikhâwtâ
hai

Who has ever taught the
widowed wife to burn herself
on the pyre

of her dead husband?

And who has ever taught love
to find bliss in renunciation?

LXIII

I. 39. are man, dhîraj kâhe na
dharai

Why so impatient, my heart?

He who watches over birds,
beasts, and insects,

He who cared for you whilst
you were yet in your mother's
womb,

Shall He not care for you now
that you are come forth?

Oh my heart, how could you
turn from the smile of your
Lord and

wander so far from Him?

You have left Your Beloved
and are thinking of others:
and this

is why all your work is in vain.

LXIV

I. 117. sâin se lagan kathin
hai, bhâi

Now hard it is to meet my
Lord!

The rain-bird wails in thirst
for the rain: almost she dies of

her longing, yet she would
have none other water than
the

rain.

Drawn by the love of music,
the deer moves forward: she
dies as

she listens to the music, yet
she shrinks not in fear.

The widowed wife sits by the
body of her dead husband:
she is not

afraid of the fire.

Put away all fear for this poor
body.

LXV

I. 22. jab main bhûlâ, re bhâi

O brother! when I was
forgetful, my true Guru
showed me the Way.

Then I left off all rites and
ceremonies, I bathed no more
in the

holy water:

Then I learned that it was I
alone who was mad, and the
whole

world beside me was sane;
and I had disturbed these
wise people.

From that time forth I knew
no more how to roll in the
dust in

obeisance:

I do not ring the temple bell:

I do not set the idol on its
throne:

I do not worship the image
with flowers.

It is not the austerities that
mortify the flesh which are
pleasing to the Lord,

When you leave off your
clothes and kill your senses,
you do not

please the Lord:

The man who is kind and who
practises righteousness, who
remains

passive amidst the affairs of
the world, who considers all
creatures on earth as his own
self,

He attains the Immortal
Being, the true God is ever
with him.

Kabîr says: "He attains the
true Name whose words are
pure, and

who is free from pride and
conceit."

LXVI

I. 20. man na rangâye

The Yogi dyes his garments,
instead of dyeing his mind in
the

colours of love:

He sits within the temple of
the Lord, leaving Brahma to
worship

a stone.

He pierces holes in his ears,
he has a great beard and

matted

locks, he looks like a goat:

He goes forth into the
wilderness, killing all his
desires, and

turns himself into an eunuch:

He shaves his head and dyes
his garments; he reads the
Gîtâ and

becomes a mighty talker.

Kabîr says: "You are going to
the doors of death, bound

hand and

foot!"

LXVII

I. 9. nâ jâne sâhab kaisâ hai

I do not know what manner of
God is mine.

The Mullah cries aloud to
Him: and why? Is your Lord
deaf? The

subtle anklets that ring on the
feet of an insect when it
moves

are heard of Him.

Tell your beads, paint your
forehead with the mark of
your God,

and wear matted locks long
and showy: but a deadly
weapon is in

your heart, and how shall you
have God?

LXVIII

III. 102. ham se rahâ na jây

I hear the melody of His flute,
and I cannot contain myself:

The flower blooms, though it
is not spring; and already the
bee

has received its invitation.

The sky roars and the
lightning flashes, the waves
arise in my

heart,

The rain falls; and my heart
longs for my Lord.

Where the rhythm of the
world rises and falls, thither
my heart

has reached:

There the hidden banners are
fluttering in the air.

Kabîr says: "My heart is
dying, though it lives."

LXIX

III. 2. jo khodâ masjid vasat
hai

If God be within the mosque,

then to whom does this world
belong?

If Ram be within the image
which you find upon your
pilgrimage,

then who is there to know
what happens without?

Hari is in the East: Allah is in
the West. Look within your

heart, for there you will find
both Karim and Ram;

All the men and women of the
world are His living forms.

Kabîr is the child of Allah and
of Ram: He is my Guru, He is
my

Pir.

LXX

III. 9. s'îl santosh sadâ
samadrishti

He who is meek and
contented., he who has an
equal vision, whose

mind is filled with the fullness
of acceptance and of rest;

He who has seen Him and
touched Him, he is freed from
all fear

and trouble.

To him the perpetual thought
of God is like sandal paste
smeared

on the body, to him nothing
else is delight:

His work and his rest are
filled with music: he sheds
abroad the

radiance of love.

Kabîr says: "Touch His feet,
who is one and indivisible,

immutable and peaceful; who
fills all vessels to the brim
with

joy, and whose form is love."

LXXI-LXXX

LXXI

III. 13. sâdh sangat pîtam

Go thou to the company of the

good, where the Beloved One
has His

dwelling place:

Take all thy thoughts and love
and instruction from thence.

Let that assembly be burnt to
ashes where His Name is not
spoken!

Tell me, how couldst thou hold
a wedding-feast, if the
bridegroom

himself were not there?

Waver no more, think only of
the Beloved;

Set not thy heart on the
worship of other gods, there
is no worth

in the worship of other
masters.

Kabîr deliberates and says:
"Thus thou shalt never find
the

Beloved!"

LXXII

III. 26. tor hîrâ hirâilwâ kîcad
men

The jewel is lost in the mud,
and all are seeking for it;

Some look for it in the east,
and some in the west; some in
the

water and some amongst
stones.

But the servant Kabîr has
appraised it at its true value,
and has

wrapped it with care in the

end of the mantle of his heart.

LXXIII

III. 26. âyau din gaune kê ho

The palanquin came to take
me away to my husband's
home, and it

sent through my heart a thrill
of joy;

But the bearers have brought
me into the lonely forest,
where I

have no one of my own.

O bearers, I entreat you by
your feet, wait but a moment
longer:

let me go back to my kinsmen
and friends, and take my
leave of

them.

The servant Kabîr sings: "O
Sadhu! finish your buying and

selling, have done with your
good and your bad: for there
are

no markets and no shops in
the land to which you go."

LXXIV

III. 30. are dil, prem nagar kã
ant na pâyâ

O my heart! you have not
known all the secrets of this
city of

love: in ignorance you came,
and in ignorance you return.

O my friend, what have you
done with this life? You have
taken

on your head the burden
heavy with stones, and who is
to

lighten it for you?

Your Friend stands on the
other shore, but you never
think in

your mind how you may meet
with Him:

The boat is broken, and yet
you sit ever upon the bank;
and thus

you are beaten to no purpose
by the waves.

The servant Kabîr asks you to
consider; who is there that
shall

befriend you at the last?

You are alone, you have no
companion: you will suffer the

consequences of your own
deeds.

LXXV

III. 55. ved kahe sargun ke

âge

The Vedas say that the
Unconditioned stands beyond
the world of

Conditions.

O woman, what does it avail
thee to dispute whether He is
beyond

all or in all?

See thou everything as thine
own dwelling place: the mist
of

pleasure and pain can never
spread there.

There Brahma is revealed day
and night: there light is His

garment, light is His seat,
light rests on thy head.

Kabîr says: "The Master, who
is true, He is all light."

LXXVI

III. 48. tû surat nain nihâr

Open your eyes of love, and
see Him who pervades this

world I

consider it well, and know
that this is your own country.

When you meet the true Guru,
He will awaken your heart;

He will tell you the secret of
love and detachment, and
then you

will know indeed that He
transcends this universe.

This world is the City of
Truth, its maze of paths
enchants the

heart:

We can reach the goal without
crossing the road, such is the

sport unending.

Where the ring of manifold
joys ever dances about Him,
there is

the sport of Eternal Bliss.

When we know this, then all
our receiving and renouncing
is

over;

Thenceforth the heat of
having shall never scorch us
more.

He is the Ultimate Rest
unbounded:

He has spread His form of
love throughout all the world.

From that Ray which is Truth,
streams of new forms are

perpetually springing: and He
pervades those forms.

All the gardens and groves
and bowers are abounding
with blossom;

and the air breaks forth into
ripples of joy.

There the swan plays a
wonderful game,

There the Unstruck Music
eddies around the Infinite
One;

There in the midst the Throne
of the Unheld is shining,
whereon

the great Being sits--

Millions of suns are shamed
by the radiance of a single
hair of

His body.

On the harp of the road what
true melodies are being
sounded!

and its notes pierce the heart:

There the Eternal Fountain is
playing its endless life-
streams of

birth and death.

They call Him Emptiness who
is the Truth of truths, in
Whom all

truths are stored!

There within Him creation
goes forward, which is beyond
all

philosophy; for philosophy
cannot attain to Him:

There is an endless world, O
my Brother! and there is the

Nameless Being, of whom
naught can be said.

Only he knows it who has
reached that region: it is
other than

all that is heard and said.

No form, no body, no length,
no breadth is seen there: how
can I

tell you that which it is?

He comes to the Path of the
Infinite on whom the grace of
the

Lord descends: he is freed
from births and deaths who
attains

to Him.

Kabîr says: "It cannot be told
by the words of the mouth, it

cannot be written on paper:

It is like a dumb person who
tastes a sweet thing--how
shall it

be explained?"

LXXVII

III. 60. cal hamsâ wâ des'
jahân

O my heart! let us go to that
country where dwells the
Beloved,

the ravisher of my heart!

There Love is filling her
pitcher from the well, yet she
has no

rope wherewith to draw
water;

There the clouds do not cover
the sky, yet the rain falls down
in

gentle showers:

O bodiless one! do not sit on
your doorstep; go forth and
bathe

yourself in that rain!

There it is ever moonlight and
never dark; and who speaks of
one

sun only? that land is
illuminate with the rays of a

million

suns.

LXXVIII

III. 63. kahain Kabîr, s'uno ho
sâdho

Kabîr says: "O Sadhu! hear
my deathless words. If you
want your

own good, examine and
consider them well.

You have estranged yourself
from the Creator, of whom you

have

sprung: you have lost your
reason, you have bought
death.

All doctrines and all teachings
are sprung from Him, from
Him

they grow: know this for
certain, and have no fear.

Hear from me the tidings of
this great truth!

Whose name do you sing, and
on whom do you meditate? O,

come

forth from this entanglement!

He dwells at the heart of all
things, so why take refuge in
empty

desolation?

If you place the Guru at a
distance from you, then it is
but the

distance that you honour:

If indeed the Master be far
away, then who is it else that

is
creating this world?

When you think that He is not
here, then you wander further
and

further away, and seek Him in
vain with tears.

Where He is far off, there He
is unattainable: where He is
near,

He is very bliss.

Kabîr says: "Lest His servant

should suffer pain He
pervades him

through and through."

Know yourself then, O Kabîr;
for He is in you from head to
foot.

Sing with gladness, and keep
your seat unmoved within
your heart.

LXXIX

III. 66. nâ main dharmî nahîn
adharmî

I am neither pious nor
ungodly, I live neither by law
nor by

sense,

I am neither a speaker nor
hearer, I am neither a servant
nor

master, I am neither bond nor
free,

I am neither detached nor
attached.

I am far from none: I am near
to none.

I shall go neither to hell nor to
heaven.

I do all works; yet I am apart
from all works.

Few comprehend my
meaning: he who can
comprehend it, he sits
unmoved.

Kabîr seeks neither to
establish nor to destroy.

LXXX

III. 69. satta năm hai sab ten
nyârâ

The true Name is like none
other name!

The distinction of the
Conditioned from the
Unconditioned is but

a word:

The Unconditioned is the
seed, the Conditioned is the
flower and

the fruit.

Knowledge is the branch, and
the Name is the root.

Look, and see where the root
is: happiness shall be yours
when

you come to the root.

The root will lead you to the
branch, the leaf, the flower,
and

the fruit:

It is the encounter with the
Lord, it is the attainment of
bliss,

it is the reconciliation of the
Conditioned and the

Unconditioned.

LXXXI-XC

LXXXI

III. 74. pratham ek jo âpai âp

In the beginning was He
alone, sufficient unto Himself:
the

formless, colourless, and
unconditioned Being.

Then was there neither
beginning, middle, nor end;

Then were no eyes, no
darkness, no light;

Then were no ground, air, nor
sky; no fire, water, nor earth;
no

rivers like the Ganges and the
Jumna, no seas, oceans, and
waves.

Then was neither vice nor
virtue; scriptures there were
not, as

the Vedas and Puranas, nor as
the Koran.

Kabîr ponders in his mind and
says, "Then was there no
activity:

the Supreme Being remained
merged in the unknown
depths of His
own self."

The Guru neither eats nor
drinks, neither lives nor dies:

Neither has He form, line,

colour, nor vesture.

He who has neither caste nor
clan nor anything else--how
may I

describe His glory?

He has neither form nor
formlessness,

He has no name,

He has neither colour nor
colourlessness,

He has no dwelling-place.

LXXXII

III. 76. kahain Kabîr vicâr ke

Kabîr ponders and says: "He
who has neither caste nor
country,

who is formless and without
quality, fills all space."

The Creator brought into
being the Game of Joy: and
from the word

Om the Creation sprang.

The earth is His joy; His joy is

the sky;

His joy is the flashing of the
sun and the moon;

His joy is the beginning, the
middle, and the end;

His joy is eyes, darkness, and
light.

Oceans and waves are His joy:
His joy the Sarasvati, the
Jumna,

and the Ganges.

The Guru is One: and life and

death., union and separation,
are

all His plays of joy!

His play the land and water,
the whole universe!

His play the earth and the
sky!

In play is the Creation spread
out, in play it is established.

The whole world, says Kabîr,
rests in His play, yet still the

Player remains unknown.

LXXXIII

III. 84. jhî jhî jantar bâjai

The harp gives forth
murmurous music; and the
dance goes on

without hands and feet.

It is played without fingers, it
is heard without ears: for He
is

the ear, and He is the listener.

The gate is locked, but within

there is fragrance: and there
the

meeting is seen of none.

The wise shall understand it.

LXXXIV

III. 89. mor phakîrwâ mângi
jây

The Beggar goes a-begging,
but

I could not even catch sight of
Him:

And what shall I beg of the
Beggar He gives without my
asking.

Kabîr says: "I am His own:
now let that befall which may
befall!"

LXXXV

III. 90. naihar se jiyarâ phât
re

My heart cries aloud for the
house of my lover; the open
road and

the shelter of a roof are all

one to her who has lost the
city

of her husband.

My heart finds no joy in
anything: my mind and my
body are

distraught.

His palace has a million gates,
but there is a vast ocean
between

it and me:

How shall I cross it, O friend?

for endless is the
outstretching
of the path.

How wondrously this lyre is
wrought! When its strings are
rightly strung, it maddens the
heart: but when the keys are
broken and the strings are
loosened, none regard it
more.

I tell my parents with laughter
that I must go to my Lord in
the

morning;

They are angry, for they do not want me to go, and they say: "She

thinks she has gained such dominion over her husband that she

can have whatsoever she wishes; and therefore she is impatient

to go to him."

Dear friend, lift my veil lightly

now; for this is the night of
love.

Kabîr says: "Listen to me! My
heart is eager to meet my
lover: I

lie sleepless upon my bed.
Remember me early in the
morning!"

LXXXVI

III. 96. jîv mahal men S'iv
pahunwâ

Serve your God, who has

come into this temple of life!

Do not act the part of a
madman, for the night is
thickening

fast.

He has awaited me for
countless ages, for love of me
He has

lost His heart:

Yet I did not know the bliss
that was so near to me, for my
love

was not yet awake.

But now, my Lover has made
known to me the meaning of
the note

that struck my ear:

Now, my good fortune is
come.

Kabîr says: "Behold! how
great is my good fortune! I
have

received the unending caress
of my Beloved!"

LXXXVII

I. 71. gagan ghatâ ghaharânî,
sâdho

Clouds thicken in the sky! O,
listen to the deep voice of
their

roaring;

The rain comes from the east
with its monotonous murmur.

Take care of the fences and
boundaries of your fields, lest
the

rains overflow them;

Prepare the soil of
deliverance, and let the
creepers of love and

renunciation be soaked in this
shower.

It is the prudent farmer who
will bring his harvest home;
he

shall fill both his vessels, and
feed both the wise men and
the

saints.

LXXXVIII

III. 118. âj din ke main jaun
balihârî

This day is dear to me above
all other days, for to-day the

Beloved Lord is a guest in my
house;

My chamber and my
courtyard are beautiful with
His presence.

My longings sing His Name,
and they are become lost in

His great

beauty:

I wash His feet, and I look
upon His Face; and I lay
before Him

as an offering my body, my
mind, and all that I have.

What a day of gladness is that
day in which my Beloved, who
is my

treasure, comes to my house!

All evils fly from my heart

when I see my Lord.

"My love has touched Him; my
heart is longing for the Name
which
is Truth."

Thus sings Kabîr, the servant
of all servants.

LXXXIX

I. 100. kôî s'untâ hai jñânî râg
gagan men

Is there any wise man who
will listen to that solemn

music which
arises in the sky?

For He, the Source of all
music, makes all vessels full
fraught,

and rests in fullness Himself.

He who is in the body is ever
athirst, for he pursues that
which

is in part:

But ever there wells forth
deeper and deeper the sound

"He is
this--this is He"; fusing love
and renunciation into one.

Kabîr says: "O brother! that is
the Primal Word."

XC

I. 108. main kê se bûjhaun

To whom shall I go to learn
about my Beloved?

Kabîr says: "As you never may
find the forest if you ignore
the

tree, so He may never be
found in abstractions."

XCI-C

XCI

III. 12. samskirit bhâshâ padhi
lînhâ

I have learned the Sanskrit
language, so let all men call
me

wise:

But where is the use of this,

when I am floating adrift, and
parched with thirst, and
burning with the heat of
desire?

To no purpose do you bear on
your head this load of pride
and
vanity.

Kabîr says: "Lay it down in the
dust, and go forth to meet the
Beloved. Address Him as your
Lord."

XCII

III. 110. carkhâ calai surat
virahin kê

The woman who is parted
from her lover spins at the
spinning

wheel.

The city of the body arises in
its beauty; and within it the

palace of the mind has been
built.

The wheel of love revolves in

the sky, and the seat is made
of

the jewels of knowledge:

What subtle threads the
woman weaves, and makes
them fine with

love and reverence!

Kabîr says: "I am weaving the
garland of day and night.
When my

Lover comes and touches me
with His feet, I shall offer Him
my

tears."

XCIII

III. 111. kotîn bhânu candra
târâgan

Beneath the great umbrella of
my King millions of suns and
moons

and stars are shining!

He is the Mind within my
mind: He is the Eye within
mine eye.

Ah, could my mind and eyes
be one! Could my love but
reach to my

Lover! Could but the fiery
heat of my heart be cooled!

Kabîr says: "When you unite
love with the Lover, then you
have

love's perfection."

XCIV

I. 92. avadhû begam des'
hamârâ

O sadhu! my land is a
sorrowless land.

I cry aloud to all, to the king
and the beggar, the emperor
and

the fakir--

Whosoever seeks for shelter
in the Highest, let all come
and

settle in my land!

Let the weary come and lay
his burdens here!

So live here, my brother, that
you may cross with ease to
that

other shore.

It is a land without earth or
sky, without moon or stars;

For only the radiance of Truth
shines in my Lord's Durbar.

Kabîr says: "O beloved
brother! naught is essential
save Truth."

XCV

I. 109. sâin ke sangat sâsur âi

Came with my Lord to my
Lord's home: but I lived not
with Him and

I tasted Him not, and my
youth passed away like a
dream.

On my wedding night my
women-friends sang in
chorus, and I was

anointed with the unguents of
pleasure and pain:

But when the ceremony was

over, I left my Lord and came
away, and

my kinsman tried to console
me upon the road.

Kabîr says, "I shall go to my
Lord's house with my love at
my

side; then shall I sound the
trumpet of triumph!"

XCVI

I. 75. samajh dekh man mît
piyarwâ

O friend, dear heart of mine,
think well! if you love indeed,

then why do you sleep?

If you have found Him, then
give yourself utterly, and take
Him

to you.

Why do you loose Him again
and again?

If the deep sleep of rest has
come to your eyes, why waste
your

time making the bed and
arranging the pillows?

Kabîr says: "I tell you the
ways of love! Even though the
head

itself must be given, why
should you weep over it?"

XCVII

II. 90. sâhab ham men, sâhab
tum men

The Lord is in me, the Lord is
in you, as life is in every seed.

O servant! put false pride
away, and seek for Him within
you.

A million suns are ablaze with
light,

The sea of blue spreads in the
sky,

The fever of life is stilled, and
all stains are washed away;

when I sit in the midst of that
world.

Hark to the unstruck bells and
drums! Take your delight in

love!

Rains pour down without
water, and the rivers are
streams of

light.

One Love it is that pervades
the whole world, few there
are who

know it fully:

They are blind who hope to
see it by the light of reason,
that

reason which is the cause of
separation--

The House of Reason is very
far away!

How blessed is Kabîr, that
amidst this great joy he sings
within

his own vessel.

It is the music of the meeting
of soul with soul;

It is the music of the
forgetting of sorrows;

It is the music that transcends
all coming in and all going
forth.

XCVIII

II. 98. ritu phâgun niyarânî

The month of March draws
near: ah, who will unite me to
my Lover?

How shall I find words for the
beauty of my Beloved? For He
is

merged in all beauty.

His colour is in all the
pictures of the world, and it
bewitches

the body and the mind.

Those who know this, know
what is this unutterable play
of the

Spring.

Kabîr says: "Listen to me,
brother' there are not many
who have

found this out."

XCIX

II. 111. Nârad, pyâr so antar
nâhî

Oh Narad! I know that my
Lover cannot be far:

When my Lover wakes, I
wake; when He sleeps, I
sleep.

He is destroyed at the root
who gives pain to my Beloved.

Where they sing His praise,
there I live;

When He moves, I walk before
Him: my heart yearns for my
Beloved.

The infinite pilgrimage lies at
His feet, a million devotees
are

seated there.

Kabîr says: "The Lover
Himself reveals the glory of
true love."

C

II. 122. kôî prem kî peng

jhulâo re

Hang up the swing of love to-
day! Hang the body and the
mind

between the arms of the
Beloved, in the ecstasy of
love's joy:

Bring the tearful streams of
the rainy clouds to your eyes,
and

cover your heart with the
shadow of darkness:

Bring your face nearer to His

ear, and speak of the deepest
longings of your heart.

Kabîr says: "Listen to me,
brother! bring the vision of
the

Beloved in your heart."

Introduction

(Moved to the back of the book so as to not distract from the poetry.)

Songs of Kabir, Translated by
Rabindranath Tagore

Introduction by Evelyn
Underhill

New York, The Macmillan
Company, 1915

The poet Kabir, a selection
from whose songs is here for
the

first time offered to English
readers, is one of the most

interesting personalities in
the history of Indian
mysticism.

Born in or near Benares, of
Mohammedan parents, and
probably

about the year 1440, be

became in early life a disciple
of the

celebrated Hindu ascetic
Râmânanda. Râmânanda had
brought to

Northern India the religious
revival which Râmânuja, the
great

twelfth-century reformer of
Brâhmanism, had initiated in
the

South. This revival was in part
a reaction against the

increasing formalism of the
orthodox cult, in part an
assertion

of the demands of the heart as
against the intense

intellectualism of the Vedânta
philosophy, the exaggerated
monism

which that philosophy
proclaimed. It took in
Râmânuja's

preaching the form of an
ardent personal devotion to
the God

Vishnu, as representing the
personal aspect of the Divine
Nature:

that mystical "religion of love"
which everywhere makes its
appearance at a certain level
of spiritual culture, and which
creeds and philosophies are
powerless to kill.

Though such a devotion is
indigenous in Hinduism, and
finds

expression in many passages
of the Bhagavad Gîtâ, there
was in

its mediæval revival a large
element of syncretism.

Râmânanda,

through whom its spirit is said
to have reached Kabîr,
appears to

have been a man of wide
religious culture, and full of
missionary

enthusiasm. Living at the
moment in which the

impassioned poetry

and deep philosophy of the
great Persian mystics, Attâr,
Sâdî,

Jalâlu'ddîn Rûmî, and Hâfiz,
were exercising a powerful
influence

on the religious thought of
India, he dreamed of
reconciling this

intense and personal
Mohammedan mysticism with
the traditional

theology of Brâhmanism.
Some have regarded both
these great

religious leaders as influenced
also by Christian thought and

life: but as this is a point upon
which competent authorities

hold widely divergent views,
its discussion is not attempted
here.

We may safely assert,
however, that in their
teachings, two--

perhaps three--apparently
antagonistic streams of
intense

spiritual culture met, as
Jewish and Hellenistic
thought met in

the early Christian Church:
and it is one of the
outstanding

characteristics of Kabîr's
genius that he was able in his
poems

to fuse them into one.

A great religious reformer, the
founder of a sect to which
nearly

a million northern Hindus still
belong, it is yet supremely as
a

mystical poet that Kabîr lives
for us. His fate has been that
of

many revealers of Reality. A
hater of religious exclusivism,
and

seeking above all things to
initiate men into the liberty of

the

children of God, his followers
have honoured his memory by

re-erecting in a new place the
barriers which he laboured to
cast

down. But his wonderful
songs survive, the
spontaneous

expressions of his vision and
his love; and it is by these, not

by the didactic teachings
associated with his name, that

he makes

his immortal appeal to the heart. In these poems a wide range of

mystical emotion is brought into play: from the loftiest

abstractions, the most otherworldly passion for the Infinite, to

the most intimate and personal realization of God, expressed in

homely metaphors and

religious symbols drawn
indifferently from

Hindu and Mohammedan
belief. It is impossible to say
of their

author that he was Brâhman
or Sûfî, Vedântist or
Vaishnavite.

He is, as he says himself, "at
once the child of Allah and of
Râm."

That Supreme Spirit Whom he
knew and adored, and to
Whose joyous

friendship he sought to induct
the souls of other men,
transcended

whilst He included all
metaphysical categories, all
credal

definitions; yet each
contributed something to the
description of

that Infinite and Simple
Totality Who revealed
Himself, according

to their measure, to the

faithful lovers of all creeds.

Kabîr's story is surrounded by
contradictory legends, on
none of

which reliance can be placed.
Some of these emanate from a
Hindu,

some from a Mohammedan
source, and claim him by
turns as a Sûfî

and a Brâhman saint. His
name, however, is practically
a

conclusive proof of Moslem
ancestry: and the most
probable tale is

that which represents him as
the actual or adopted child of
a

Mohammedan weaver of
Benares, the city in which the
chief events

of his life took place.

In fifteenth-century Benares
the syncretistic tendencies of

Bhakti religion had reached

full development. Sûfîs and
Brâhmans

appear to have met in
disputation: the most spiritual
members of

both creeds frequenting the
teachings of Râmânanda,
whose

reputation was then at its
height. The boy Kabîr, in
whom the

religious passion was innate,
saw in Râmânanda his
destined

teacher; but knew how slight
were the chances that a
Hindu guru

would accept a Mohammedan
as disciple. He therefore hid
upon the

steps of the river Ganges,
where Râmânanda was
accustomed to

bathe; with the result that the
master, coming down to the
water,

trod upon his body

unexpectedly, and exclaimed
in his

astonishment, "Ram! Ram!"--
the name of the incarnation
under

which he worshipped God.
Kabîr then declared that he
had

received the mantra of
initiation from Râmânanda's
lips, and was

by it admitted to discipleship.
In spite of the protests of

orthodox Brâhmans and
Mohammedans, both equally
annoyed by this

contempt of theological
landmarks, he persisted in his
claim;

thus exhibiting in action that
very principle of religious

synthesis which Râmânanda
had sought to establish in
thought.

Râmânanda appears to have
accepted him, and though
Mohammedan

legends speak of the famous
Sûfî Pîr, Takkî of Jhansî, as
Kabîr's

master in later life, the Hindu
saint is the only human
teacher

to whom in his songs he
acknowledges indebtedness.

The little that we know of
Kabîr's life contradicts many
current

ideas concerning the Oriental
mystic. Of the stages of

discipline through which he
passed, the manner in which
his

spiritual genius developed, we
are completely ignorant. He
seems

to have remained for years
the disciple of Râmânanda,
joining in

the theological and
philosophical arguments
which his master held

with all the great Mullahs and

Brâhmans of his day; and to
this

source we may perhaps trace
his acquaintance with the
terms of

Hindu and Sûfî philosophy. He
may or may not have
submitted to

the traditional education of
the Hindu or the Sûfî
contemplative:

it is clear, at any rate, that he
never adopted the life of the

professional ascetic, or
retired from the world in
order to

devote himself to bodily
mortifications and the
exclusive pursuit

of the contemplative life. Side
by side with his interior life

of adoration, its artistic
expression in music and
words--for he

was a skilled musician as well
as a poet--he lived the sane
and

diligent life of the Oriental
craftsman. All the legends
agree

on this point: that Kabîr was a
weaver, a simple and
unlettered

man, who earned his living at
the loom. Like Paul the
tentmaker,

Boehme the cobbler, Bunyan
the tinker, Tersteegen the

ribbon-maker, he knew how to
combine vision and industry;

the

work of his hands helped
rather than hindered the
impassioned

meditation of his heart.
Hating mere bodily
austerities, he was

no ascetic, but a married man,
the father of a family--a

circumstance which Hindu
legends of the monastic type
vainly

attempt to conceal or explain--

and it was from out of the
heart

of the common life that he
sang his rapturous lyrics of
divine

love. Here his works
corroborate the traditional
story of his

life. Again and again he extols
the life of home, the value and

reality of diurnal existence,
with its opportunities for love
and

renunciation; pouring
contempt--upon the
professional sanctity of

the Yogi, who "has a great
beard and matted locks, and
looks like

a goat," and on all who think
it necessary to flee a world

pervaded by love, joy, and
beauty--the proper theatre of
man's

quest--in order to find that
One Reality Who has "spread
His form

of love throughout all the
world." [Footnote: Cf. Poems
Nos. XXI,

XL, XLIII, LXVI, LXXVI.]

It does not need much
experience of ascetic
literature to

recognize the boldness and
originality of this attitude in
such a

time and place. From the
point of view of orthodox
sanctity,

whether Hindu or
Mohammedan, Kabîr was
plainly a heretic; and his

frank dislike of all
institutional religion, all
external

observance--which was as
thorough and as intense as
that of the

Quakers themselves--
completed, so far as
ecclesiastical opinion

was concerned, his reputation

as a dangerous man. The
"simple

union" with Divine Reality
which he perpetually extolled,
as alike

the duty and the joy of every
soul, was independent both of
ritual

and of bodily austerities; the
God whom he proclaimed was
"neither

in Kaaba nor in Kailâsh."
Those who sought Him
needed not to go

far; for He awaited discovery
everywhere, more accessible
to "the

washerwoman and the
carpenter" than to the self--
righteous holy man.

[Footnote: Poems I, II, XLI.]

Therefore the whole
apparatus of

piety, Hindu and Moslem
alike--the temple and mosque,
idol and holy

water, scriptures and priests--

were denounced by this
inconveniently

clear-sighted poet as mere
substitutes for reality; dead
things

intervening between the soul
and its love--

The images are all lifeless,
they cannot speak:

I know, for I have cried aloud
to them.

The Purâna and the Koran are
mere words:

lifting up the curtain, I have
seen.

[Footnote: Poems XLII, LXV,
LXVII.]

This sort of thing cannot be
tolerated by any organized
church;

and it is not surprising that
Kabîr, having his head-
quarters in

Benares, the very centre of
priestly influence, was
subjected to

considerable persecution. The
well-known legend of the
beautiful

courtesan sent by Brâhmans
to tempt his virtue, and
converted,

like the Magdalen, by her
sudden encounter with the
initiate of a

higher love, pre serves the
memory of the fear and dislike
with

which he was regarded by the

ecclesiastical powers. Once at
least, after the performance of
a supposed miracle of healing,
he

was brought before the
Emperor Sikandar Lodi, and
charged with

claiming the possession of
divine powers. But Sikandar
Lodi, a

ruler of considerable culture,
was tolerant of the
eccentricities

of saintly persons belonging
to his own faith. Kabîr, being
of

Mohammedan birth, was
outside the authority of the
Brâhmans, and

technically classed with the
Sûfîs, to whom great
theological

latitude was allowed.
Therefore, though he was
banished in the

interests of peace from
Benares, his life was spared.

This seems
to have happened in 1495,
when he was nearly sixty
years of age;
it is the last event in his
career of which we have
definite
knowledge. Thenceforth he
appears to have moved about
amongst
various cities of northern
India, the centre of a group of
disciples; continuing in exile

that life of apostle and poet of
love to which, as he declares
in one of his songs, he was
destined

"from the beginning of time."
In 1518, an old man, broken
in

health, and with hands so
feeble that he could no longer
make the

music which he loved, he died
at Maghar near Gorakhpur.

A beautiful legend tells us

that after his death his
Mohammedan and Hindu
disciples disputed the
possession of his

body; which the
Mohammedans wished to
bury, the Hindus to burn.

As they argued together,
Kabîr appeared before them,
and told

them to lift the shroud and
look at that which lay
beneath. They

did so, and found in the place
of the corpse a heap of
flowers;

half of which were buried by
the Mohammedans at Maghar,
and half

carried by the Hindus to the
holy city of Benares to be
burned--

fitting conclusion to a life
which had made fragrant the
most

beautiful doctrines of two
great creeds.

II

The poetry of mysticism might
be defined on the one hand as
a

temperamental reaction to the
vision of Reality: on the other,
as

a form of prophecy. As it is the
special vocation of the

mystical consciousness to
mediate between two orders,
going out

in loving adoration towards
God and coming home to tell
the

secrets of Eternity to other
men; so the artistic self-
expression

of this consciousness has also
a double character. It is love-

poetry, but love-poetry which
is often written with a
missionary

intention.

Kabîr's songs are of this kind:

out-births at once of rapture
and

of charity. Written in the
popular Hindi, not in the
literary

tongue, they were deliberately
addressed--like the vernacular

poetry of Jacopone da Todì
and Richard Rolle--to the
people rather

than to the professionally
religious class; and all must
be struck

by the constant employment
in them of imagery drawn
from the

common life, the universal
experience. It is by the
simplest

metaphors, by constant
appeals to needs, passions,
relations which

all men understand--the
bridegroom and bride, the
guru and

disciple, the pilgrim, the
farmer, the migrant bird-- that

he

drives home his intense
conviction of the reality of the
soul's

intercourse with the
Transcendent. There are in
his universe no

fences between the "natural"
and "supernatural" worlds;
everything

is a part of the creative Play
of God, and therefore--even in
its

humblest details--capable of revealing the Player's mind.

This willing acceptance of the here-and-now as a means of

representing supernal realities is a trait common to the greatest

mystics. For them, when they have achieved at last the true

theopathic state, all aspects of the universe possess equal

authority as sacramental declarations of the Presence

of God; and

their fearless employment of
homely and physical symbols--
often

startling and even revolting to
the unaccustomed taste--is in

direct proportion to the
exaltation of their spiritual
life. The

works of the great Sûfîs, and
amongst the Christians of
Jacopone

da Todì, Ruysbroeck, Boehme,

abound in illustrations of this
law.

Therefore we must not be
surprised to find in Kabîr's
songs--his

desperate attempts to
communicate his ecstasy and
persuade other

men to share it--a constant
juxtaposition of concrete and

metaphysical language; swift
alternations between the most

intensely anthropomorphic,

the most subtly philosophical,
ways of

apprehending man's
communion with the Divine.

The need for this

alternation, and its entire
naturalness for the mind
which

employs it, is rooted in his
concept, or vision, of the
Nature of

God; and unless we make
some attempt to grasp this,
we shall not

go far in our understanding of
his poems.

Kabîr belongs to that small
group of supreme mystics--
amongst

whom St. Augustine,
Ruysbroeck, and the Sûfî poet
Jalâlu'ddîn

Rûmî are perhaps the chief--
who have achieved that which
we might

call the synthetic vision of
God. These have resolved the

perpetual opposition between
the personal and impersonal,
the

transcendent and immanent,
static and dynamic aspects of
the

Divine Nature; between the
Absolute of philosophy and
the "sure

true Friend" of devotional
religion. They have done this,
not by

taking these apparently

incompatible concepts one
after the

other; but by ascending to a
height of spiritual intuition at

which they are, as Ruysbroeck
said, "melted and merged in
the

Unity," and perceived as the
completing opposites of a
perfect

Whole. This proceeding
entails for them--and both
Kabîr and

Ruysbroeck expressly
acknowledge it--a universe of
three orders:

Becoming, Being, and that
which is "More than Being,"
i.e., God.

[Footnote: Nos. VII and XLIX.]

God is here felt to be not the

final abstraction, but the one
actuality. He inspires,
supports,

indeed inhabits, both the
durational, conditioned, finite
world

of Becoming and the
unconditioned, non-
successional, infinite

world of Being; yet utterly
transcends them both. He is
the

omnipresent Reality, the "All-
pervading" within Whom "the
worlds

are being told like beads." In
His personal aspect He is the

"beloved Fakir," teaching and
companioning each soul.

Considered

as Immanent Spirit, He is "the Mind within the mind." But all

these are at best partial
aspects of His nature,
mutually

corrective: as the Persons in
the Christian doctrine of the

Trinity--to which this
theological diagram bears a
striking

resemblance--represent
different and compensating

experiences of
the Divine Unity within which
they are resumed. As
Ruysbroeck

discerned a plane of reality
upon which "we can speak no
more of

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
but only of One Being, the
very

substance of the Divine
Persons"; so Kabîr says that
"beyond both

the limited and the limitless is
He, the Pure Being."

[Footnote:

No. VII.]

Brahma, then, is the Ineffable
Fact compared with which
"the

distinction of the Conditioned
from the Unconditioned is but
a

word": at once the utterly
transcendent One of
Absolutist

philosophy, and the personal
Lover of the individual soul--

"common to all and special to
each," as one Christian mystic
has

it. The need felt by Kabîr for
both these ways of describing

Reality is a proof of the
richness and balance of his
spiritual

experience; which neither
cosmic nor anthropomorphic
symbols,

taken alone, could express.
More absolute than the
Absolute,

more personal than the
human mind, Brahma
therefore exceeds

whilst He includes all the
concepts of philosophy, all the

passionate intuitions of the
heart. He is the Great
Affirmation,

the font of energy, the source
of life and love, the unique

satisfaction of desire. His
creative word is the Om or

"Everlasting Yea." The
negative philosophy which
strips from the

Divine Nature all Its
attributes and defining Him
only by that

which He is not--reduces Him
to an "Emptiness," is
abhorrent to

this most vital of poets.--
Brahma, he says, "may never
be found

in abstractions." He is the
One Love who Pervades the
world.,

discerned in His fullness only
by the eyes of love; and those
who

know Him thus share, though
they may never tell, the
joyous and

ineffable secret of the
universe. [Footnote: Nos. VII,
XXVI,

LXXVI, XC.]

Now Kabîr, achieving this
synthesis between the
personal and

cosmic aspects of the Divine
Nature, eludes the three great
dangers which threaten
mystical religion.

First, he escapes the
excessive emotionalism, the
tendency to

an exclusively
anthropomorphic devotion,
which results from an

unrestricted cult of Divine
Personality, especially under
an

incarnational form; seen in
India in the exaggerations of

Krishna worship, in Europe in
the sentimental
extravagances of

certain Christian saints.

Next, he is protected from the
soul-destroying conclusions of

pure monism, inevitable if its

logical implications are
pressed

home: that is, the identity of
substance between God and
the

soul, with its corollary of the
total absorption of that soul in

the Being of God as the goal
of the spiritual life. For the

thorough-going monist the
soul, in so far as it is real, is

substantially identical with
God; and the true object of

existence is the making patent
of this latent identity, the

realization which finds
expression in the Vedântist
formula "That

art thou." But Kabîr says that
Brahma and the creature are
"ever

distinct, yet ever united"; that
the wise man knows the
spiritual

as well as the material world
to "be no more than His

footstool."

[Footnote: Nos. VII and IX.]
The soul's union with Him is a
love

union, a mutual inhabitation;
that essentially dualistic
relation

which all mystical religion
expresses, not a self-
mergence which

leaves no place for
personality. This eternal
distinction, the

mysterious union-in-
separateness of God and the
soul, is a

necessary doctrine of all sane
mysticism; for no scheme
which

fails to find a place for it can
represent more than a
fragment of

that soul's intercourse with
the spiritual world. Its
affirmation

was one of the distinguishing
features of the Vaishnavite

reformation preached by
Râmânûja; the principle of
which had

descended through
Râmânanda to Kabîr.

Last, the warmly human and
direct apprehension of God as
the

supreme Object of love, the
soul's comrade, teacher, and

bridegroom, which is so
passionately and frequently
expressed in

Kabîr's poems, balances and
controls those abstract
tendencies

which are inherent in the
metaphysical side of his vision
of

Reality: and prevents it from
degenerating into that sterile

worship of intellectual
formulæ which became the
curse of the

Vedântist school. For the mere
intellectualist, as for the mere

pietist, he has little
approbation. [Footnote: Cf.
especially

Nos. LIX, LXVII, LXXV, XC,
XCI.] Love is throughout his

"absolute sole Lord": the
unique source of the more
abundant life

which he enjoys, and the
common factor which unites
the finite

and infinite worlds. All is
soaked in love: that love

which he
described in almost Johannine
language as the "Form of
God."

The whole of creation is the
Play of the Eternal Lover; the
living, changing, growing
expression of Brahma's love
and joy.

As these twin passions
preside over the generation of
human life,

so "beyond the mists of

pleasure and pain" Kabîr finds
them

governing the creative acts of
God. His manifestation is love;

His activity is joy. Creation
springs from one glad act of

affirmation: the Everlasting
Yea, perpetually uttered
within the

depths of the Divine Nature.

[Footnote: Nos. XVII, XXVI,
LXXVI,

LXXXII.] In accordance with

this concept of the universe as
a

Love-Game which eternally
goes forward, a progressive

manifestation of Brahma--one
of the many notions which he
adopted

from the common stock of
Hindu religious ideas, and
illuminated

by his poetic genius--
movement, rhythm, perpetual
change, forms

an integral part of Kabîr's
vision of Reality. Though the

Eternal and Absolute is ever
present to his consciousness,
yet

his concept of the Divine
Nature is essentially dynamic.
It is

by the symbols of motion that
he most often tries to convey
it to

us: as in his constant
reference to dancing, or the
strangely

modern picture of that
Eternal Swing of the Universe
which is

"held by the cords of love."
[Footnote: No. XVI.]

It is a marked characteristic
of mystical literature that the

great contemplatives, in their
effort to convey to us the
nature

of their communion with the
supersensuous, are inevitably
driven

to employ some form of
sensuous imagery: coarse and
inaccurate as

they know such imagery to be,
even at the best. Our normal
human

consciousness is so
completely committed to
dependence on the

senses, that the fruits of
intuition itself are
instinctively

referred to them. In that

intuition it seems to the
mystics that

all the dim cravings and
partial apprehensions of sense
find

perfect fulfilment. Hence their
constant declaration that they

see the uncreated light, they
hear the celestial

melody, they taste the
sweetness of the Lord, they
know an

ineffable fragrance, they feel

the very contact of love. "Him
verily seeing and fully feeling,
Him spiritually hearing and
Him

delectably smelling and
sweetly swallowing," as Julian
of Norwich

has it. In those amongst them
who develop psycho-sensorial

automatisms, these parallels
between sense and spirit may
present

themselves to consciousness

in the form of hallucinations:
as the

light seen by Suso, the music
heard by Rolle, the celestial

perfumes which filled St.
Catherine of Siena's cell, the
physical

wounds felt by St. Francis and
St. Teresa. These are
excessive

dramatizations of the
symbolism under which the
mystic tends

instinctively to represent his
spiritual intuition to the
surface

consciousness. Here, in the
special sense-perception
which he

feels to be most expressive of
Reality, his peculiar

idiosyncrasies come out.

Now Kabîr, as we might
expect in one whose reactions
to the

spiritual order were so wide

and various, uses by turn all
the

symbols of sense. He tells us
that he has "seen without
sight"

the effulgence of Brahma,
tasted the divine nectar, felt
the

ecstatic contact of Reality,
smelt the fragrance of the
heavenly

flowers. But he was
essentially a poet and
musician: rhythm and

harmony were to him the
garments of beauty and truth.
Hence in

his lyrics he shows himself to
be, like Richard Rolle, above
all

things a musical mystic.
Creation, he says again and
again, is

full of music: it is music. At
the heart of the Universe

"white music is blossoming":
love weaves the melody,

whilst

renunciation beats the time. It
can be heard in the home as
well

as in the heavens; discerned
by the ears of common men as
well as

by the trained senses of the
ascetic. Moreover, the body of

every man is a lyre on which
Brahma, "the source of all
music,"

plays. Everywhere Kabîr

discerns the "Unstruck Music
of the

Infinite"--that celestial melody
which the angel played to St.

Francis, that ghostly
symphony which filled the
soul of Rolle

with ecstatic joy. [Footnote:
Nos. XVII, XVIII, XXXIX, XLI,
LIV,

LXXVI, LXXXIII, LXXXIX,
XCVII.] The one figure which
he adopts

from the Hindu Pantheon and
constantly uses, is that of
Krishna

the Divine Flute Player.
[Footnote: Nos. L, LIII,
LXVIII.] He

sees the supernal music, too,
in its visual embodiment, as

rhythmical movement: that
mysterious dance of the
universe before

the face of Brahma, which is
at once an act of worship and
an

expression of the infinite
rapture of the Immanent God.'

Yet in this wide and rapturous
vision of the universe Kabîr

never loses touch with diurnal
existence, never forgets the

common life. His feet are
firmly planted upon earth; his
lofty

and passionate apprehensions
are perpetually controlled by
the

activity of a sane and vigorous
intellect, by the alert

commonsense so often found
in persons of real mystical
genius.

The constant insistence on
simplicity and directness, the
hatred

of all abstractions and
philosophizings,[Footnote:
Nos. XXVI,

XXXII, LXXVI] the ruthless
criticism of external religion:
these

are amongst his most marked
characteristics. God is the
Root

whence all manifestations,
"material" and "spiritual,"
alike

proceed; [Footnote: Nos.
LXXV, LXXVIII, LXXX, XC.]
and God is

the only need of
man--"happiness shall be
yours when you come to

the Root." [Footnote: No.

LXXX.] Hence to those who
keep their

eye on the "one thing
needful," denominations,
creeds, ceremonies,

the conclusions of philosophy,
the disciplines of asceticism,
are

matters of comparative
indifference. They represent
merely the

different angles from which
the soul may approach that
simple

union with Brahma which is
its goal; and are useful only in
so

faras they contribute to this
consummation. So thorough-
going is

Kabîr's eclecticism, that he
seems by turns Vedântist and

Vaishnavite, Pantheist and
Transcendentalist, Brâhman
and Sûfî.

In the effort to tell the truth
about that ineffable

apprehension,

so vast and yet so near, which
controls his life, he seizes and

twines together--as he might
have woven together
contrasting

threads upon his loom--
symbols and ideas drawn from
the most

violent and conflicting
philosophies and faiths. All
are needed,

if he is ever to suggest the

character of that One whom
the

Upanishad called "the Sun-
coloured Being who is beyond
this

Darkness": as all the colours
of the spectrum are needed if
we

would demonstrate the simple
richness of white light. In thus

adapting traditional materials
to his own use he follows a
method

common amongst the mystics;
who seldom exhibit any
special love

for originality of form. They
will pour their wine into
almost

any vessel that comes to
hand: generally using by
preference--and

lifting to new levels of beauty
and significance--the religious
or

philosophic formulæ current
in their own day. Thus we find

that

some of Kabîr's finest poems
have as their subjects the

commonplaces of Hindu
philosophy and religion: the
Lîlâ or Sport of

God, the Ocean of Bliss, the
Bird of the Soul, Mâyâ, the
Hundred-

petalled Lotus, and the
"Formless Form." Many,
again, are soaked

in Sûfî imagery and feeling.

Others use as their material
the

ordinary surroundings and
incidents of Indian life: the
temple bells,

the ceremony of the lamps,
marriage, suttee, pilgrimage,
the

characters of the seasons; all
felt by him in their mystical
aspect,

as sacraments of the soul's
relation with Brahma. In many
of these

a particularly beautiful and intimate feeling for Nature is shown.

[Footnote: Nos. XV, XXIII, LXVII, LXXXVII, XCVII.]

In the collection of songs here translated there will be found

examples which illustrate nearly every aspect of Kabîr's thought,

and all the fluctuations of the mystic's emotion: the ecstasy,

the despair, the still beatitude,
the eager self-devotion, the

flashes of wide illumination,
the moments of intimate love.

His

wide and deep vision of the
universe, the "Eternal Sport"
of

creation (LXXXII), the worlds
being "told like beads" within
the

Being of God (XIV, XVI, XVII,
LXXVI), is here seen balanced
by

his lovely and delicate sense
of intimate communion with
the

Divine Friend, Lover, Teacher
of the soul (X, XI, XXIII, XXXV,
LI,

LXXXV, LXXXVI, LXXXVIII,
XCII, XCIII; above all, the
beautiful

poem XXXIV). As these
apparently paradoxical views
of Reality

are resolved in Brâhma, so all

other opposites are reconciled
in

Him: bondage and liberty, love
and renunciation, pleasure
and pain

(XVII, XXV, XL, LXXIX). Union
with Him is the one thing that

matters to the soul, its destiny
and its need (LI, I, II, LIV,
LXX,

LXXIV, XCIII, XCVI); and this
union, this discovery of God,
is the

simplest and most natural of
all things, if we would but
grasp it

(XLI, XLVI, LVI, LXXII, LXXVI,
LXXVIII, XCVII). The union,
however,

is brought about by love, not
by knowledge or ceremonial
observances

(XXXVIII, LIV, LV, LIX, XCI);
and the apprehension which
that union

confers is ineffable--"neither
This nor That," as Ruysbroeck

has it

(IX, XLVI, LXXVI). Real
worship and communion is in
Spirit and in

Truth (XL, XLI, LVI, LXIII,
LXV, LXX), therefore idolatry
is an

insult to the Divine Lover
(XLII, LXIX) and the devices
of

professional sanctity are
useless apart from charity and
purity

of soul (LIV, LXV, LXVI). Since
all things, and especially the

heart of man, are God-
inhabited, God-possessed
(XXVI, LVI, LXXVI,

LXXXIX, XCVII), He may best
be found in the here-and-now:
in the

normal. human, bodily
existence, the "mud" of
material life (III,

IV, VI, XXI, XXXIX, XL, XLIII,
XLVIII, LXXII). "We can reach
the

goal without crossing the
road" (LXXVI)--not the cloister
but the

home is the proper theatre of
man's efforts: and if he cannot
find

God there, he need not hope
for success by going farther
afield.

"In the home is reality." There
love and detachment,
bondage and

freedom, joy and pain play by

turns upon the soul; and it is
from

their conflict that the
Unstruck Music of the Infinite
proceeds.

Kabîr says: "None but Brahma
can evoke its melodies."

"This version of Kabîr's songs
is chiefly the work of

Mr. Rabîndranâth Tagore, the
trend of whose mystical
genius makes

him--as all who read these

poems will see--a peculiarly
sympathetic interpreter of
Kabîr's vision and thought. It
has

been based upon the printed
Hindî text with Bengali
translation

of Mr. Kshiti Mohan Sen; who
has gathered from many
sources--

sometimes from books and
manuscripts, sometimes from
the lips of

wandering ascetics and
minstrels--a large collection of
poems

and hymns to which Kabîr's
name is attached, and
carefully

sifted the authentic songs
from the many spurious works
now

attributed to him. These
painstaking labours alone
have made

the present undertaking
possible.

The reference of the headlines
of the poems is to:

Sântiniketana; Kabîr by Srî
Kshitimohan Sen, 4 parts,

Brahmacharyâsrama, Bolpur,
1910-1911.

For some assistance in
normalizing the
transliteration we are
indebted to Professor J. F.
Blumhardt.
